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ABSTRACT

A brief description of the Florida Linkage System's training modules is provided. The training program is designed to introduce teachers and educational personnel to a systematic approach to problem-solving and decision-making. Emphasis is placed on group interaction, and raising awareness of self as an individual in a social context. The title, purpose, expected outcomes, and school usefulness of 25 modules are given and ordering information is provided. (LH)

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A Description of the Florida Linkage System Training Program

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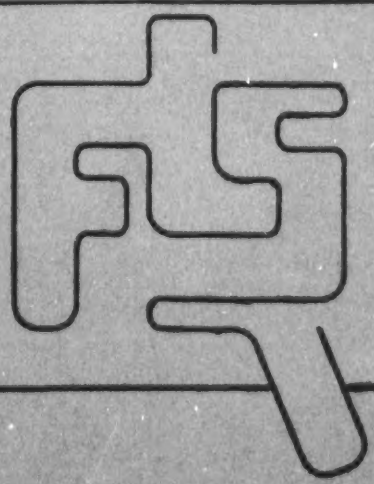

Florida Linkage System

TRAINING FOR FACILITATING AND LINKING

Developed by:

The Diffusion Training Unit
University of Florida

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A TRAINING PROCESS TO FACILITATE
PROBLEM SOLVING IN SCHOOLS

FLORIDA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT UTILIZATION PROJECT

Director: Inga G. Fahs
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Florida Department of Education

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THE FLORIDA LINKING SYSTEM TRAINING

Training Overview

A set of modules were developed to introduce school personnel to some methods and resources for school problem solving and staff development skills. Emphasis is placed on communication techniques, data gathering, problem analysis, decision making, goal identification and adapting solutions to a school's own situation. The training is designed to be done in teams of of four to six persons, each team representing one school. School level members of the team, are the principal and two or three teachers. Other team members are any or all of the following: a district level person (linking agent or curriculum supervisor) a parent advisory council member, a university technical assistant, and a Department of Education technical assistant. A central purpose of the training is to enable participants to become more effective group members.

Training activities are designed to move the individual's attention from his own perceptual field and personal processes as a data gatherer to the processes of other individuals and to the group. The focus of attention alternates between self and the group. The individual is given guidelines for monitoring his "self" while attending to the group process, and gradually he becomes more aware of the social dynamics of the present situation and of their effects on him personally, on other individuals in the group, and on the group all together. He is constantly reminded that

he is a social being. He watches how his own behaviors relate to and influence the system, and he has opportunities for reflecting on how he should change himself to become more influential on the system.

Training modules

The modules are each about one and one-half hours long and are meant to be sequenced when used. While each module focuses on specific topics, the topics intentionally overlap from one module to the next, so that both the contents of the training and its effects are cumulative.

Each module has specific objectives, and all modules together have the objective of breaking down the intangible barriers which separate people so that trust and "groupness" develops. The product of the training is not so much cognitive gain as it is an increasing awareness of one's perceptual field, the differences between the perceptual fields of individuals, and of how these differences alter group life.

The activities are structured and carefully timed. Theory is combined with practice in each session through a "DO-LOOK-LEARN" strategy. The "DO-LOOK-LEARN" approach can be described as:

DO: A situation is created in which the focus is doing. Engage in activities, given all or some of the following: a situation, a task, a document, some criteria, a confrontation.

LOOK: Look at your self doing. Examine the activities, make judgments about what happened, apply evaluation criteria, reflect about why things happened as they did.

LEARN: Decide what you have learned to do differently. Learnings are absorbed by linking the activities to own situation, by using theoretical inputs to understand the activity, by making

decisions about how the insights gained can be adapted and modified for issues in the back home situation.*

The "linking" aspect of this approach is especially important in helping individuals relate the skills learned in this workshop to the problems identified in their back home groups.

The modules for both participants and trainers have been field tested, having been used in a continuous sequence for five or six days, through 27 modules. Teams were taken away from the home setting. This freed participants from extraneous responsibilities and allowed an intensive training experience. The only obligations of the trainees were to their teams and their own development. These arrangements were as much a part of the design as any of the paper or audio-visual materials.**

Trainers

The modules are not self-instructional, but are designed to be implemented by trainers with group process skills. A group of consultants with such skills from districts, universities and the Department of Education have been prepared to conduct these training activities. Their names can be obtained from the Office of Educational Dissemination/Diffusion in the Florida Department of Education (904)487-1078.

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*Preparing Educational Training Consultants (PETC I), Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon.

**At the present time, any other sequencing should be considered a field test, and arranged accordingly.

Availability of Modules

Training modules, both participant version and trainer version, may be otained at cost from:

Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative
411 W. Boulevard South
Chipley, Florida 32428
(904)638-4131

Please specify "Trainer" or "Participant" modules, as well as "Elementary" or "Secondary" versions.

Trainers Modules.....$17.50
Participants Modules.....$16.25

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
0. Introductory Module Elementary and Secondary versions	1) To provide an overview of the Florida Linkage System, its resources, processes and objectives. 2) To provide some practical examples of facilitating and linking. 3) To help participants decide whether they wish to utilize the resources to undergo the training entailed.	1) Participants will express a general knowledge of FLS. 2) Participants will develop an understanding of how FLS can work in school settings. 3) Participants will set dates for subsequent training.	1) Resources of FLS are for the purpose of improving school decision making skills.
1. Orientation	1) To provide an overview of FLS training, and of the system's dependence on the skills and talents of participants. 2) To enable participants to become better acquainted. 3) To develop clarity about what is needed and wanted from the training and the participants during the workshop.	1) The participants will express a general understanding of the purpose of FLS and of what it can and cannot do, in a general way. 2) Participants will feel more comfortable within the group, have a sense of membership in the workshop 3) Participants will experience greater clarity about the processes of the training and feel committed to participating 100%. Products: Interviews and Contracts.	1) The resources of FLS are for the purpose of school improvement in basic skills. 2) The training models two data-gathering techniques which can be immediately adapted for classroom use: the interviews and the contracts.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
2. Problem Solving Simulation Elementary and Secondary versions	1) To provide an overview of the strategies and techniques used in the training. 2) To provide examples of facilitating and linking. 3) To begin a study of own situation.	1) Participants will demonstrate awareness of some strategies and techniques which will be used in the training, and name some examples of facilitating and linking from the Bridgeton example. 2) Participants will be aware of some organizational needs in the school, as perceived by staff members. 3) Participants will be aware of some problem solving strategies which may be applied to various situations. Products: Worksheet	1) Participants have an overview of how FLS operates to assist with a multitude of common school problems. 2) The worksheet presents some key concepts of problem analysis which can be adapted for classroom use.
3. The School As A Social System	1) To begin a study of the school by examining its goals, functions, and communications patterns. 2) To study the operational characteristics of human systems, and compare them to the school setting. 3) To begin to practice using the Bolman Planning Model.	1) Participants will share with one other perceptions about the school social system. 2) Participants may express greater clarity about how the resolution of organizational problems will facilitate the resolution of other problems. 3) Participants will begin to specify conflict issues in the school. Product: The shared analysis of the school's social system.	1) Techniques and concepts for analyzing the school social system can be used both by faculty teams and in the classroom with students. 2) The Bolman Model is a generic tool which can be practiced in a variety of situations, and appropriate for use in classroom.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
4. Communication Skills	1) To begin to clarify the characteristics of the social systems in each school. 2) To practice communication and group process skills. 3) To acquire a variety of perspectives on problems.	1) Participants will feel more clear about what the problems in the school are and how they are viewed by others. 2) Participants will be aware of additional skills for helping the group process. Product: A list of facts and assumptions about each school situation.	All the techniques used in the session could be applied to the school for use with either faculty groups or in the classroom, using a variety of subjects.
5. Feelings and Perceptions	1) To increase the participant's knowledge of how he or she works in groups. 2) To reflect on desired changes in communications techniques 3) To facilitate participant's openness to one another. 4) To increase the participant's awareness of additional sources of data.	1) Participants will acquire a deeper understanding of the roles of feelings, perceptions, and sharing in the development of team work. 2) Teams will begin to exhibit signs of group cohesion, such as spending free time together, the initiation of personal agendas, and so on. Product: Fluent verbal communications.	All the techniques used in this session can be adapted for use in the classroom or with faculty teams. (Groups should be cautioned, however, not to use this session with a group which has not already become well acquainted.)

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
6. Principal's Training for Project Leadership	1) To introduce some theories which affect the climate and productiveness of groups. 2) To introduce some techniques which facilitate group consensus. 3) To prepare principals to serve as team or workshop leaders during MODULE 7.	1) Principals will share their problems and concerns related to shared decision making and accountability. 2) Principals will express a greater understanding of the role of expectations on group productivity. 3) Principals will express a willingness to try out the ideas presented in MODULE 7 in the workshop and back home. Product: 1) A score on Blake's Grid, 2) Awareness of McGregor's theories, 3) A list of favored strategies for developing group consensus efficiently.	1)All of these techniques can be adapted for use with the school faculty. 2)The group consensus techniques can be used with pupils in the classroom.
7. Management Theory and Developing Consensus on Goals	1) To provide an opportunity for reflecting on ideas and theories for organizing and managing human systems. 2) To practice consensus building techniques. 3) To focus on problems with a high probability of success. 4) To begin to think about strategies for achieving the goals.	1) Participants will express both great enthusiasm for the system, and great anxiety: they will understand the responsibility which has been given to them, to share in the ultimate decision-making. 2) Participants will have new skills for evaluating goals; 3) And for sharing data about goals. Product: A list of priorities for each school.	These techniques can be adapted for use in faculty meetings. A more simple adaption could be used in the classroom.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
8. Skills for Facilitating and Linking	1) To identify the personal issue, concerns and problems which are associated with the adoption and implementation of innovations. 2) To identify skills needed for conflict resolution and problem solving.	Participants will be more clear about the role of the facilitator and about the issues involved. Products: Lists of issues, concerns and skills needed.	The technique of role playing to dramatize issues, concerns and needed skills can be used in staff development activities and in the classroom.
9. Individual Strengths in Groups (LIFO)	1) To provide a theory for understanding the individual behaviors which facilitate group work. 2) To focus on the strengths of each individual. 3) To plan for developing needed styles/skills.	1)Participants will express increased understanding of selves and teammates. 2)Styles which tend to be excessive and produce obstacles to effective teamwork will be altered.	1)The LIFO can be used among faculty as a staff development activity. 2)The theory can be useful for understanding pupil behavior, and techniques for changing it.
10. Concepts & Skills of Feedback	1) To begin to develop a regular norm and process for sharing feelings, concerns, resources 2) To practice giving and receiving feedback according to guidelines for improving interpersonal communications.	1)Participants will feel closer to other group members. 2)Groups will demonstrate greater group cohesion. 3)Participants will express appreciation for the guidelines. Product: Easier verbal communications among participants.	Following the guidelines will make any feedback session more productive. This should be encouraged in the classroom, both between teacher and pupil, as well as among pupils.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
11. Prioritizing Goals	1) To develop goals. 2) To practice systematic prioritizing. 3) To begin to select strategies 4) To practice brainstorming	1) Process skills for prioritizing . 2) The sharing of rationales Product: A list of priorities and strategies.	These techniques can be used in the school and classroom.
12. Decisions Based On Data	1) To understand the distinction between "needs" and "wants" 2) To provide guidelines for evaluating data 3) To practice listening skills.	1) Participants will feel more confident of their ability to make teacher education recommendations, and this confidence will be reflected in their more active participation in the group's activities. 2) Participants will demonstrate increased interest in gathering and analyzing data.	This activity can be adapted for use in the classroom by changing the content subject matter of the examples and role play.
13. Defining The Problem	1) To practice writing a problem statement according to guidelines which include four criteria. 2) To practice helping skills which facilitate problem identification.	1) Participants will experience greater clarity about how problems can be defined. 2) Participants will feel confident in applying the guidelines to real situations. Product: A definition of the Dobbleganger's problem according to the four criteria in the guidelines.	These guidelines and helping skills can be used in the school with the faculty or in the classroom. In the classroom, the teacher can apply the guidelines to various problems, or adapt the guidelines for use with and by pupils.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
14. Force Field Analysis	1) To practice the principles of force field analysis.	1) Participants will feel confident to practice the force field. 2) Participants will acquire new skills for determining if additional data is needed, and what the data should relate to. Product: A force field analysis of the Dobbleganger Problem.	This tecnhique for problem analysis may be used on a greater variety of problems, and it can be adapted for use by pupils.
15. The RUPS Model	To introduce the RUPS model, to study and practice applying it.	1) Participants will experience greater clarity in understanding the problem solving process, their role in it, and strategy options. Product: Two worksheets for understanding the theory, and a checklist for diagnosing the participants's own situation. (The latter helps the participant locate self in RUPS model at the present stage of problem solving.)	The RUPS can be helpful in assisting the faculty with understanding the problem solving process. The ideas could be adapted for use with pupils.
16. Developing An Action Plan and Defining Roles	1) To focus on what training and action should be taken by each team member. 2) To develop clarity about each member's role in the next steps.	Participants experience clarity about what is to be done, the needed resources to do it, and the responsibilities of each member of the group. Product: An action plan for each school team.	The techniques used in this session can be adapted for use both in an in-service context and for faculty planning. They can also be adapted for use with pupils.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
17. Exploration of Alternatives (The Mini-Sessions)	1) To simulate linking 2) To provide specialized training.	1) Participants increase understanding of what linking is and how it is helpful. 2) Participants acquire special skills needed for specific tasks identified in the team's action plan. Product: Vary according to mini-session which is attended.	The linking concept is basic to understanding the FLS plan for school improvement.
18. Simulating Linking to Revise Plans	1) To share learnings 2) To review "back home" resources 3) To practice team building skills.	Participants express appreciation for and increased understanding of the linkage concept. Product: A revised action plan.	Sharing of training and applying it to school plans can be a useful norm for a staff to cultivate.
19. Linker Training	To prepare linkers for leadership during the next module.	Linkers will express self confidence in their ability to serve as trainers during the next session.	This is a central part of the linker's "real world" task in the FLS.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
20. Organizing A Linkage Sub-System	1) To enable participants to develop an effective communications network. 2) To revise plans in accordance with research criteria.	Participants will express feeling more securely organized. Product: A revised and expanded action plan which includes planning for the needed communications network.	The plans produced during this module are for actual, immediate back home applicability.
21. Contingency Planning & Trouble Shooting	1) To develop a broad checklist for "trouble shooting" the proposed plan.	1) Participants will be aware of additional constraints and options in the system. 2) They will increase "trouble shooting" skills. Product: Contingency plans and a summary plan.	This plan and these techniques increase the team's probability of carrying out a successful back-home improvement project.
22. Reporting and Assessing Processes and Results	1) To share plans 2) To achieve closure of the workshop 3) To record the school's plans.	1) Participants will experience increased commitment to their plans. 2) They have a sense of psychological completion regarding the workshop. Product: A group report of the team's plan.	The plan and commitment to it are essential to the team's participation in a school improvement plan.
23. Matching the Solution to the Problem Elementary & Secondary versions	1) To introduce a process for teamwork to assess an innovation (solution) 2) To introduce the Product Description Checklist	Participants will feel more confident of their ability to assess options. Product: A completed Product Description Checklist.	These skills and processes are useful for assessing educational products.

MODULE	PURPOSES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	USE IN THE SCHOOL
24. Planning for Implementation Elementary & Secondary versions	1) To assist the team with developing a plan for implementing and evaluating the solution.	The team will be clear about schedules, tasks, roles, constraints, and resources regarding the adoption, and know what is the criteria for evaluating its effectiveness. Product: A plan for implementation.	Implementation of this plan will produce the data which determines if the adoption is indeed a solution.
25. Influencing the Faculty	1) To review basic principles of influence and problem solving. 2) To develop strategies for dealing with faculty resistance to change.	Participants will express feeling more confident of their ability to influence the faculty. Products: An analysis of the team's influence in the school, and a list of strategies to use in the school.	1) The reviewed problem solving skills are needed for many stages of the FLS process. 2) The development of a demonstration site for the innovation in the school is the most certain means of influencing the faculty, and should become the goal of every team.